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SAN DIEGO MAGAZINE / FEBRUARY 2011 / THE NEW PORNOGRAPHERS

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The New Pornographers

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Though San Diego has long-running ties to the multibillion-dollar porn industry, it also appears to be the center of the exploding amateur side of the biz. In other words, the new face of porn could well be that of your neighbor.

BY DAVE GOOD



A few months ago, Tindala (not her real name) decided she would pay her college tuition by appearing for pay in amateur porn. Though she admits to having a fairly inspired

sex life, she had never considered doing anything even remotely close to adult entertainment. A veteran of corporate San Diego, Tindala was a career administrative assistant. But the economy turned south, her employer laid her off, a side business as a wedding planner failed, and she and her husband split up. At 39, Tindala saw higher education as the answer — and homemade X-rated pictures and videos as the means.

"I'm full of surprises," she says. "A lot of people don't expect that when they meet me." Tindala, who now lives in Pomona, sounds a lot like a friendly soccer mom over the telephone. "I'm the girl next door."

She launched her own Web site but balked when it came to posting content. Tindala describes herself as a BBW (code for big, beautiful woman). In the beginning, she says, she was body-shy. But she learned there is a strong niche in the adult market for amateur women of ample dimension, and she got over it. She posted nude photos of herself on a couple of fetish sites, then posed nude for an art photographer's book of housewife types with their toys. "I'm not selling anything that anyone else isn't selling," she says. If porn has a fresh new face, it very well could be that of your neighbor. Amateur porn is about real people having real sex. Industry watchers say the shift toward everyday types starring in their own "reality" sex movies is on the rise due to inexpensive digital technology. Some credit the surge in amateur porn to a subtle left turn in moral values. But in other cases, the reasons for breaking the porn envelope are far more pedestrian.

"We're getting a lot more submittals from people wanting to make a little extra money," says Moffitt Timlake, a major player in the business of amateur porn. In shorts, polo shirt and running shoes, he projects not an ounce of sleaze and looks as if he might have just finished playing a round of golf.

"We get letters from some people that say, 'I had to pay for my daughter's dress for the prom, so I really need to sell this sex tape.' A lot of people are saying they lost a job, or the husband's off to war, and they need to make some



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extra money." Timplake and his brother Farrell own Home Grown Video, said to have originated amateur porn. Now headquartered in a nondescript building in the Mission Gorge area, Home Grown was started in the early 1980s by a Lakeside swinger named Gregg Swaim. The first offerings were videotapes of Swaim's friends, which he sold from his video rental shop. Sales were good, but Home Grown went under. The Timplakes bought the company's assets in 1993 at auction. Their mother loaned them the money.

"It doesn't matter what people look like as long as they're having great sex," says Timplake. "It could be a middle-age couple who are going at it and are in tune with each other. You put that side by side with one of the other big studio films, and...come on. I've seen [porn star] Jenna Jameson bounce up and down and make the same sounds in, like, 16 different scenes. It gets annoying."

Timplake says he thinks technology and a general loosening up of cultural morality account for the new acceptability of starring in one's own porn video. "I hate to say it, but the Pamela Andersons and the Paris Hiltons kind of broke some ground there and made [amateur porn] more acceptable."

Karen Gless disagrees with the morality part of the equation. Gless is a San Diego-based marriage and family therapist and a registered nurse whose specialty is couples and sex therapy. She says that back in the days of real film, people still made sex tapes and naughty pictures, but discretion was the rule. Film had to be developed, and most processors reported so-called blue movies to police. Gless claims it was Polaroid (and later video) that changed things. "And now there are so many different digital tools that people can use themselves," she says. "The morality hasn't changed, but digital technology and the Internet have changed everything." If America ever had a chastity belt, it's off, says adult film actor-writer-director-producer Dick Chibbles (not his real name). "There is a place for everybody in adult entertainment, from the 18-year-old girl to the 75-year-old grandmother." He should know. Chibbles owns Blue Circus Entertainment in East County, and he sometimes films amateurs for porn distributors. Is there fast and easy money to be made in the bargain? "Yes and no. It can be quick money," he says, "but it's going to follow you. You're not going to be a congressman after this." San Diego has long been a quiet player in adult entertainment. Aside from the birth of the porn amateur, the region was an early hub for Internet porn. Most agree it started with locally owned and operated Bustyamateurs.com (now defunct and not to be confused with Bustyamateurs2), which spawned a plethora of local Internet porn sites — as many as 300 to 400 at its peak. "Back when I was still shooting adult content," says commercial photographer Frank Bongiorno, "San Diego was the amateur hub of the world." He says he got his start in the biz by shooting for Bustyamateurs. "Girls want to come to someplace warm and beautiful, so they come to San Diego." There was an endless supply, he says, of young, beautiful women who wanted to share their sexuality. "It was easy pickings for models."

At the top of the porn-industry pile in San Diego is Naughty America, a San Fernando Valley transplant (the Valley being the ground zero of porn) ensconced on a secure floor in a Broadway office building right around the corner from the Hustler store. Naughty America officials did not respond to numerous phone calls or e-mails. While most in the local porn biz seemed forthcoming and even eager to talk, there are at least as many who wouldn't, including strippers who had made amateur porn on the side but were now claiming the Fifth. "I got kids," one stripper says. "I wouldn't want them to find out." If the numbers say anything, it's that we are a nation of voyeurs. "The pornography industry has larger revenues than Microsoft, Google, Amazon, eBay, Yahoo, Apple and Netflix combined," writes Jerry Ropelato on TopTenReviews, adding that "the porn industry is a major component of the world economy, generating large-scale revenue and employment with an estimated \$3,000 spent every second around the world."

Mark Kernes, an editor at Adult Video News, thinks it's not so much. "At its height, the industry produced about 13,000 titles in one year, most of which were compilations. Gross revenues were about \$4 billion in stores, maybe another billion from Internet sales, and I can't estimate how much people paid for video-on-demand. Likely not more than another half-billion. Wholesale sales of videos by manufacturers were about \$1 billion. The rest is markup by distributors and retailers."



Industry insiders suggest that California's annual combined porn output amounts to \$12 million or more of the national total. But there are signs that the porn gold mine may be playing out, says Kernes: "Current figures are much less, likely by about half." He says the adult entertainment industry has been crushed by a weak economy and Internet piracy.



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"Why would you go out and buy a DVD," says Frank Bongiorno, "when you can get anything you want online for free?"

In 2009, the Los Angeles Times reported that at least five out of 100 of the top porn Web sites across the country were so-called "tube sites" — free sites on which much of the content is either uploaded by amateurs or pirated from pay sites. An Internet ranking service said those tube sites attract more users than the Huffington Post does.

Dave Cummings feels the pain. He says piracy has seriously eroded his once-lucrative La Jolla — based adult-film production business. "What the porn industry needs," he says, "is an embed code that can't be hacked that would prevent a porn pirate from uploading a pay production to a free site."

Cummings (not his real name, but close) is a retired Army lieutenant colonel and a decorated Vietnam vet. After leaving active duty, he became a porn actor. At 70, Cummings is the self-proclaimed oldest working porn star. He estimates he has appeared in at least 700 porn videos since 1994. He has played the two most clichéd parts in modern porn: the pool cleaner and the pizza delivery guy.

A likable, savvy businessman and an industry activist, Cummings taught Learning Annex seminars in 2005 titled "Learn How to Shoot Your Own Adult Video." "Classes ranged from 15 to 50 people," he says. "Most of them thought they could make some money at it, set up a porn site for their girlfriends, or get a lot of sex being a director or a producer. Morally and ethically, I had to tell them the truth" — meaning, he says, that the business of porn is no longer worth the investment dollars needed to get a business off the ground.

Every Wednesday night, the San Diego Adult Entertainment Industry Networking Club meets at a Kearny Mesa sports bar. The group boasts 700 members who are undeterred by gloomy porn market forecasts. But tonight, many are deterred by rain. Only six of them show. One is a dominatrix, one is a photographer, another wants to produce adult videos, and there are a few acting hopefuls.

Missy Swallows — she swears that's her real name — is 24. She lives in East County with her husband. Wearing a push-up bra and drinking a vodka cranberry, she has a cheery open face, light on the makeup. Swallows has already done a sex movie, but she says it was made for the private collector market.

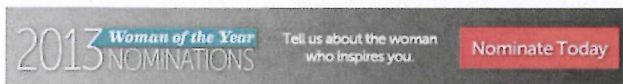
"Amateur porn," she says, "is surprisingly popular in San Diego." Private collectors, she explains, want nude photos or videos for personal use. "They're not gonna publish them online or make a movie. They just want them on their computer."

Any trepidation about making her first porn film? "Not at all." Later, after a cigarette break, she says this about on-camera sex: "I really love it. I might be a nympho. Feeling self-conscious is not a possibility."

Jon (he asks that his last name not be used) founded the networking group two years ago. Pleasant and open, with his hair pulled back into a long ponytail, he is a software engineer and is married. "My wife is my business partner," he says.

"We initially met to discuss forming a porn company," he says, "but it evolved into this networking group that's been meeting now for just over two years." He calls it a support meeting for adult entertainment industry hopefuls.

"It's a tough market for traditional porn stuff, because there's way too much out there." The market may be stronger, Jon says, for amateur porn. Thus far he's produced some short features, and he worked as crew on another film. "But," he says, "I haven't filmed my big opus yet."



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